

National Research Council Panel Releases Final Report on Independent Review

In a study ordered by Congress, the National Research Council (an operating arm of the National Academy of Sciences) recommended that the Army Corps of Engineers' more complex planning studies receive external review by independent expert panels. The study, "Review Procedures for Water Resources Planning," briefed to the Corps and to Congress July 24 and made public July 25, focused on independent review of Corps projects.

The Water Resources Development Act of 2000 authorized the study as well as work from three other panels. The other panels, focusing on methods of project analysis, stewardship and adaptive management, and river basins and coastal systems, should complete their analyses next summer.

"We are glad to have this report in hand, and are beginning to review it," said Maj. Gen. Robert H. Griffin, the Corps' Director of Civil Works. "The Corps appreciates the extensive effort of the panel. We now have a lot of valuable information to digest as we review the document in depth. We look forward to working within the Administration and with Congressional committees as others take the report under advisement. As the process evolves, we will all have to be mindful of taxpayers' interests in developing the Chief of Engineers reports, carefully considering the most effective and efficient means possible."

Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Robert B. Flowers said in testimony earlier this month before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works that the Corps welcomes additional independent review in order to ensure that projects are sound national investments that reflect the nation's needs.

In the meantime, the Corps is focusing internally on improving its planning and review capability. "In many respects, it's a back-to-basics approach. We have identified our strengths and weaknesses in the planning discipline. We continue to improve our planning capability by emphasizing training, state-of-the-art modeling, and enhanced regional planning capability," Griffin said. The Corps also agrees with others who are calling for a more holistic watershed approach to the nation's water resource issues, and believes that the time is now for a public policy dialogue regarding the management of the nation's water.

The National Research Council study may be viewed at:
http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10468.html?se_side

Peer Review Panel findings -- Questions and Answers July 26, 2002